

WORLD DOMINION

The World Dominion Movement advocates Informed Continuous Co-ordinated Evangelism to reach everyone at home and abroad. Its basis is belief in the Deity and Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the World's Only Saviour, and in the Final Authority of Holy Scripture.

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Nomads of French Equatorial Africa

FLORENCE N. GRIBBLE

WHEN the founder (James S. Gribble) of the Oubangui-Chari Mission entered French Equatorial Africa in 1918, with Oubangui-Chari as his objective, his slogan was, 'First the pagans, then the Mohammedans.' The district which he chose was pagan soil, no other religion had ever entered there. A decade later, the Mohammedan penetration of Oubangui-Chari began, especially in the sub-division of Boali and principally in the Yaloke district. So it has come to pass that Yaloke station, established for the pagans in 1924, also gives an opportunity for work among Mohammedans.

Two reasons for this nomadic Mohammedan invasion are the freedom here from the tsetse fly and the long grass which makes it a very suitable country for cattle, for these people are cattle-herders. They have come far, from Nigeria and the Cameroons. Among them are numbered the Hausa, the Boro (or Bororo) the Fulani, the Fulbai and members of other tribes, all of whom speak the Hausa language among themselves inter-tribally, their own languages within their respective tribes and the trade language of Oubangui-Chari (the Sango) with the pagan peoples around them. No attempt is made to acquire the languages of the pagan tribes. Their chief industry is cattle-breeding, and their chief produce milk, butter and meat, from which they derive a considerable profit. They have also followed the custom of the people in making gardens of manioc, corn, sweet potatoes and peanuts, all of which enrich their diet.

Nomads are proverbially traders, and a variety of things, attractive to the native eye, have come to be displayed in their simple shed-like bazaars. Here you will find not only abundance of beef—covered with flies—but cheap cotton calicoes, thread, pins, needles, cigarettes, salt, tobacco, soap, paper and jewellery. The last may be of brass, beads or coral or even an adaptation of coins. Only

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to-day I saw the forehead of a three-year-old child adorned with a huge coin which I at first took to be an American dollar, but which I found upon investigation to be a French five-franc piece, dated 1870. In addition to their cattle, these nomads have their horses, which have well-made, home-manufactured saddles, and excellent bits and bridles. These horses are their pride and joy. The raising of sheep and chickens forms a minor but lucrative industry.

The people themselves are intensely interesting. Unlike our own peoples, they are voluminously, though often filthily, attired. This morning while I was out in my Ford car visiting the sick, I noticed turbans and ties to match, black, white and yellow predominating. Over a filthy *boubou* and pantaloons may be thrown a sheet-like garment with yellow and white stripes. A *malamu's* (teacher's) attendant wears a flowing black robe. Here is a man, smooth-shaven, with red cap and snow-white gown, he is a chief's assistant. Girdles may be broad or narrow or entirely absent, slippers are of leather or canvas and usually without heels. There is a black and white checked robe lined with flannelette, destined perhaps for the *malamu* himself, who is a 'wise man' with beads and Koran. His conversation may be in proverbs and his fanaticism is only equalled by his apparent affability. There are other types: the beggar, the trader, the rover, the merchant's assistant, seemingly of different classes and with differing facial contours. These are the men one meets on the street, in the bazaars and in the palaver houses.

One must, for the most part, seek the women in their homes, although there are some women-vendors of milk and butter and some who carry loads, balanced on their heads and supported with strings at either side with ingenious hand-adjustments. All the women are bare-footed, the girls are bare-headed. A high-class woman wears the typical veil, with embroidered shawl, loose blouse and flowing skirt. Her teeth are reddened with various dyes. She carries her baby on her back, within a strong support of cloth. An elderly woman may be naked to the

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waist, but even she will wear a black veil. Many of the women have beautiful Roman or Grecian features, in marked contrast with the round faces, upturned noses and thick lips of the majority of pagan women. Ears are often grotesquely ornamented and nails vie with teeth in brilliancy. Even the little girls have reddened teeth, but they are very simply dressed, wearing for the most part only a drapery of cloth and deftly supporting basins of water upon their heads. Here and there in their villages one finds Arab beauties, many of them, alas, prostitutes, enticing Mohammedan and pagan youths to their downfall.

The women's houses are square, and larger than those of the men, accommodating the cooking fire and equipment. They are proud of their children, a mother of twins seems to be especially honoured and respected—another contrast with our pagan tribeswomen. Children seem happy, but have few toys and games. This morning some of them were exceptionally merry in their play. I found that their plaything was a mouse, with a string tied to its tail.

On Sunday morning I visited Chief Haussman, and found his house large and airy, with two doors. He had a well-built bed, and a flask—presumably of whisky—by its side. The ordinary beds, however, are very low. Like our pagans they seem to prefer the ground, even when damp, in sickness. A village patient was lying this morning on a mat, without even the usual protecting layer of grass. Skin rugs are also used on beds and floors. Their fires are open, built on stones, which support their cooking pots and basins. Many homes have only calabashes or gourds for dishes, and fingers are still preferred to forks.

These people are great frequenters of our dispensary. Yaws, scabies, venereal diseases, ulcers, parasitic diseases, are found everywhere among them. It is harder to teach a high standard of cleanliness to them than it is to the pagan, who is, for the most part, naked, and who bathes daily.

The Gospel is being constantly presented to them, not only through the dispensary, but through palaver-house, market and home visitation. Many come frequently

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to our homes and offices to be taught. So far we have only one convert from among these people over whom our hearts yearn so intensely. That one, though not yet baptized, is a very earnest personal worker, and never misses an opportunity to bring other members of his own tribe under the sound of the Gospel. He accompanies us willingly and freely on our trips of evangelization, and loves to pray, or, as he puts it, to 'talk to *Isa.*'

Readers of WORLD DOMINION will, I know, pray earnestly for these people who have come from afar to our very doors, that in the indigenous Church which is being so rapidly built up among the former pagan tribes of Oubangui-Chari, there may be many, hitherto followers of Islam, who shall bow the knee to our Lord Jesus.

Since 'prayer, not circumstances, mould the life' may we not intercede fervently and effectually for those who have been born under the bondage of Islam? Let the reader who has a desire for widespread usefulness intercede with world-wide vision, remembering the promises of God who said 'I will make the dry land springs,' and 'Who, passing through the Valley of Bacca, maketh it a well, the rain also filleth the pools.'

A Medical Muddle

Miss Emily Godfrey of Umuhia Hospital, writing in *The Kingdom Overseas*, says that the medical worker is concerned at the ease with which certain drugs, some of them poisons, can be procured in the open markets of Nigeria, for instance croton oil. The people buying these drugs have no idea of dosage or whether the medicines are for inward or outward application. The following letter is a case in point :—

'Because I have drunk plentiful different medicines, it cannot quench them all. Their names is Sulphur Bitter, Potash, B.T.S., Alkool (alcohol), Izal, Urodonal, Epsom-salt, Blood Mixture, India Root Pills, and Pain Killer. But all this medicine have no power to stop my tribulation.'